1850
Sketch
of
Thomas
HUNT
1859

PAPERS
OF
SHAKERS

186

OHIO
Union Village

Autobiographical Sketches

of Thomas Hunt

Written
by Request
Union Village, Warren County, Turtle
Creek Township, Ohio.

The memory of the just is blessed; But
the name of the wicked shall rot

1850.

The following lines gives but a brief Sketch of the thread of life, which in my case, is nearly run to an end. Nevertheless it may be interesting to some to know in short, where I originated, and learn in some degree, how my time has been spent, and how I have trodden the devious paths, wherein I have been led, through the vale of time. Be that as it may, it is great joy and satisfaction to myself, to know, that the greatest portion of my life, has been spent among God's people, in the mortifying work of Self-denial and the cross.

J. H.

I was born in Massachusetts, at that time Hampshire County (now Franklin) March 3rd 1774. I had six brothers, and three sisters. My Father was born in Ipswich, on the river Thames, in the State of Connecticut. He remained there until he was sixteen years of age. His Father then moved to fort Cumberland in Novascotia; and took his son along. He there remained for seven years; and then returned to Connecticut, Being then in his 23rd year, he married into a respectable family by the name of Fitch. His wife's name was Anna. From them we have all sprang.

My mother had but one brother, and no sister; her father dying when she was an infant. Her mother married again, a man by the name of Howes, by whom she had several children. Of which I can tell but little about.

My Father lived in Connecticut, until he had

two children. Then moved in to Massachusetts; and there
remained until Sept. 1777 at which time I was three years
old. When he moved to Vermont, and settled in Windham
County, six miles east of the green mountain, There I was
brought up, until I was seventeen years of age. In 1791
my father moved over the mountain into Bennington
County, and tarried for one year. In the summer of 1791.
I went with my father into the State of N. York, in
Albany County, where he bought a farm; and moved
onto it in 1792. Here I remained until June 1797.
When after hearing many reports about Kentucky, and
other parts of the western country; I concluded to travel
westward, and see for myself what the far famed country
was. In July I landed at Marietta, at the mouth of
the Muskingum; without any thing remarkable taking
place worth recording. I tarried at Marrietta but one day,
when I turned around, and with a canoe, pushed up the

river to Wheeling, where I tarried ten days. Then with my canoe I turned back, and landed at Vienna on the Virginia shore, eight miles below Marietta. After tarrying about eight weeks at Vienna, I returned to Wheeling, to convey down the river, some property I had left at the latter place. I took my journey by land, on foot and alone, through a dense wilderness for about one hundred miles. Few can have any conception at this day, of the many dangers and sufferings experienced by those who first settle new countries, in travelling from place to place, without roads or any thing to guide them, save water courses or a pocket compass. To strike up a camp, in the woods and alone, exposed to wild beast and reptiles; and your fare a little journey cake and venison, which you carry with you. Such fare in this day would seem very rough to the present generation; But this was my lot, and my fare on the present journey. ~~I travelled on, until~~

6

I travelled on, until night overtook me, following the meanderings of the river. When it became so dark, I could go no further, I lay down by the side of a log, with no weapon of defence, save a club, to keep off the wild and ferocious beasts of prey. I lay until about 4 in the morning, when I audibly heard something walking; I raised up to look, and saw a wolf, within eight feet of me, standing with his fore feet on a log, looking me full in the face. I drew my club and struck at him, but did not hit him. But I convinced him, that I should fight for my life. He being unwilling to enter into mortal combat galloped off, and left me, to pursue my journey without molestation. Which I did, and made my way to Wheeling, without any further annoyance. I got my property, and returned by the same rout. Having been absent about one week.

In October I made an excursion thro, the wilderness up

to Athens on the Hocking river, about 40 miles from Vienna; tarried there two days; and returned by way of the Hocking to the Ohio, twenty miles below Vienna. Thence up the Ohio, to my transient abode, at Vienna.

From this time I began to meditate on returning to the east. Not having funds sufficient for the purpose, I concluded to work, for the purpose of getting some money to enable me to get home. Dr. Spencer giving me an offer I engaged with him, for some time. For the ballance of the winter, I undertook a job of work for two brothers by the name of Hanley. And in the latter part of February 1798 I began to prepare for my journey homeward; and by the 8th day of March, I was on my way for N. York. Being well pleased with the country, I thought if it were possible I would induce my father, to remove with his family to the west

8 On my journey homeward, I was accompanied by three others, we were all on foot, and had to travel through an unbroken wilderness for seventy miles before we reached any settlement. On the first days travel we reached a small River, called Middle Island, which we had to wade nineteen times in one day; and then camp in the woods, for the night. The wolves howled around us, but did us no other harm. On the third day we reached the west Branch of the Monongahela; which we also had to wade. The water was deep and cold. But we plunged through the stream, and arrived that evening at a small town called Clarksburgh, on the east side of the River. From here we had no serious difficulties to encounter; until we came to the Allegany Mountains. Here the snow was two or three inches deep, and still snowing.

We here called in at a house for some refreshment; and the people having the small pox, I caught the contagion

In consequence of which I had to lay by sixteen days before it was considered safe for me to travel. Two of my companions went on; The other one tarried with me until I was able to travel. We left here about the first of April. Went by the way of Amboy. We here took water, and sailed up the sound to N. York city. Thence up the North River. And on the 15 day of April, I arrived safe at home; where I was gladly received. I now of course related all the adventures of my travels. After hearing my statement of the country; they all concluded, to dispose of their availables as soon as possible, and move to the west.

I made my abode at my fathers until the first of June. When I left for Connecticut, And on the 10th. of the same month, was lawfully married to Sally Barns, the daughter of a respectable farmer.

She was born and brought up in the Town of Waterbury County of New Haven, Connecticut. She had one sister and three half Brothers. All by the name of Barns. After tarrying a few days, I left my wife at her Brothers; and returned to my fathers in N. York. I now was engaged in making preparation, to remove to the west. And having got so far in readiness. I went to Connecticut on the first of Sept^r and brought her to my fathers. On the 27^th of September, we left Albany County. N. York, for Ohio, accompanied by my fathers family. After passing through those trials, common to all travellers, we reached Wheeling on the 2^nd of November. My father had four horses; and I had one. He sold one horse and wagon at Wheeling.

The river was to low at this time for boats to run Consequently we remained three days at Wheeling, waiting for a rise in the river. In the mean time, I went

up the river, some distance, and purchased two canoes and lashed them together, which formed a conveyance for both families. The horses were driven down by land, by my brothers. Taking care to keep along the river, in sight of the rest of the families. In consequence of high winds, and low water, we were six days in going one hundred miles. On the 10th. of November, we landed at Kenna, where the families remained, for two years and a half, in making preparations for a final settlement. Within this time my father sold another horse; he then had but two left. And before the expiration of two years, they both died. The one I had, died also. We had in consequence, to commence a new place without any team. In this place (Kenna) Loretta Eliza was born, August 20th 1799. Harrison County now Wood County, Virginia.

In the spring of 1799. I set out in company with some others, to explore the country; in order to find

a place for a permanant location. We went down the Ohio, to the mouth of the Scioto, Then up that stream near to where Chillicothe now stands. We then struck through the wilderness, back to Vienna. We found some good land along the River bottoms. But out from the river, the country was, mostly hilly and uneven. Such at least, as did not please me; and I concluded to look further.

In the fall of 1799. I took another tour, to see the country with my gun on my shoulder, in company with two or three others. We went up the Muskingum; and explored the country, as far as the mouth of Licking. We found some good land; and fine timber; likewise some prairie. But not being suited; we went further. We passed up Licking, to a small prairie called Bowlingreen; not far from where Newark now stands. Here I killed the largest Bear I ever saw. I shot him through the heart; and he fell dead on the spot. Here we found a family

in a Cabbin, with whom we found shelter, for two or three days; and with them we left the remainder of our Bear meat. We examined the country around for some distance. Then returned home; having been absent, about two weeks.

Having heard many glowing accounts, concerning the Miami Country, I determined to make one more journey, to view that part of the world; before I made a purchase of land, for a permanant settlement. Accordingly in the fall of 1800. in company of four others, I started to explore the Miami Country. We went down the Ohio by water. And after a slow, and tedious passage of eleven days; we landed at Cincinnati. Here we found the beginning of a thriveing town. The country was setling fast, and the town improving.

From here, we struck through the woods, to

Coleraine; on the east bank of the great Miami. We here crossed the river, and went up through the wilderness on the west side. We found a beautiful country, fine land, good timber, and some large and handsome prairies. We crossed the River at the Big Prairie; and followed up the east side, to Dayton. We were much pleased with the Country. The land was good; and every thing that we saw, had the appearance of being calculated, to add to the comfort of man. There was rich bottoms; interspersed with small openings, easily cleared; and suitable to commence a farm on, without much labor. The up land was good, and heavily timbered with Oak, Walnut and Hickory; and various other kinds of timber. Wild game seemed to abound, in abundance. Beside, Bear and Deer, Wild Turkeys seemed to abound without number. In fine it appeared to be the garden spot, of the world. I felt determined to find a home for myself in this place

It being late in the fall, and the weather becoming cold, we pushed up Mad River to Springfield; thence to Columbus. And thence through the centre of the present State of Ohio, to our transient place of residence.

Our journey was tedious; and the weather cold. Snow had fallen to some depth; and a crust had formed on its surface. And in addition to cold, we could get no game to live on; so that we were like to suffer for want of provision. However we pressed on through the wilderness, and I think, we killed but one turkey, on the rout of near 200 miles, after we left the Miami waters. However after many sufferings and privations, we reached Vienna about the first of December.

The account I gave of the country seemed to satisfy all. And it was concluded, to prepare for starting in the spring as early as the season would permit. Every preparation was made within the compass of our power.

Four other families concluded to accompany us. We joined together, and bought two boats. We also made a raft, about 80 feet long, to convey our heavy lumber. We set sail on the 28th. of March for Cincinnati. There, after encountering some high winds, and other difficulties, we safely landed, on the 2nd. day of April. Thence started with a hired wagon, accompanied by another family, with the idea of going to Dayton. But when within three miles of the big prairie, one wheel of the wagon broke down, which obliged me to stop. Here I fell in with old Abraham Freeman, who gave me shelter, in one part of his house. And also, informed me, that a good tract of land, for a farm, could be had, on Gregories Creek. And thither I went, and being pleased with the land, I made a purchase. Here I moved my little family, and set them down in the

woods, without any shelter, except a camp.

This circumstance I always looked upon, as being a providential interposition. My intention was to go to Dayton. But by stoping where I did, my lot was cast, in the midst of the blaze of the Kentucky Revival, a great work of God, that went through this country, in the beginning of the present century. This work I engaged in, which prepared my soul to receive the testimony of the everlasting gospel. But to return to my narative. After stalling down in the woods, without one stick of timber being amiss, save the materials for making a camp. I commenced clearing land, for the purpose of planting some corn. The land I bought was all heavily timbered. There was no prairie land, to assist the beginner; but all had to be cleared and fenced. However by diligence and perseverence, I cleared and fenced two acres, and put it in corn. In the mean time, I also built a snug log cabbin; and added other conveniencies thereto. Having the previous fall

sown some small grain at Kenna, it became necessary to attend to it. Accordingly, some time in the latter part of June I left home, bound for that place to secure my grain I harvested and threshed it out. Part of it, I converted into whiskey, and the ballance into other property. When through, I took all on board a pirogue, and came down the River to Cincinnati. I made out well with my loading, and arrived home about the middle of September. Found all well, though throughout the country, ague and fever prevailed to some extent.

My little crop of corn looked fine, and all else, that I had put in the ground seemed to prosper. It so turned out, that I had enough to take me through the winter, with the addition of what I could procure from the woods. For we had in some measure to depend on the hunters luck, for meat. We progressed on in improvements. And the next year, got more land opened, and more grain in the ground. And matters thus seemed to prosper with

me; at least to all appearance. And to add to our prospects, our daughter Polley was born, on the 23rd. of Sept. 1802. Which added one more to our family.

At this time my prospects appeared flattering. A good piece of land; and whatever I put into it, seemed almost certain, of returning a rich reward. A young and healthy family, enjoying as much peace and quietness as was the lot of many, in this world of sorrow and trouble.

Nothing but adversity, could hinder us from increasing in wealth; and the comforts of life. But this state of things was not to continue with me. I must be kept down; and taught to feel, my dependence on the providence of God. And thus, in the fore part of February 1803. while we were all absent from home, except the children, attending society meeting; our house caught fire, and burned to the ground with all its contents, leaving us nothing, but what we had on. Luckily the children had gone, to their

grand parents, about one hundred rods distant. So that no lives were lost in the conflagration. Now, this reduced us in some measure, to a worse condition, than when we first came to the place. It is true, we had land; and some of it was cleared. But we had no house, no bed, no clothing for a change; and no provision except a little corn, that I had taken for a small debt. Thus situated, what was to be done. It would not do to sink down under discouragements, and give the matter up; by no means. I felt like making another trial, for a living. And for this purpose, I set about to repair the loss.

I got another house put up; and got into it. And with a little help from our neighbors, in the way of clothing, bedding &c. we once more made another beginning, against the tide of adversity. And by diligence and perseverance, we had so far recovered, from our loss, that we were able to entertain the first witnessies who brought the gospel to this country. They were

my house their home, while they were in those parts, and
I was able to make them measureably comfortable. 21

Here ended my selfish struggle, for the things of this world. I believed, and received the testimony of the gospel. And set out to obey it, by confessing all my sins, and taking up a full cross against all evil in my knowledge. And it added greatly to my comfort; my companion took hold with me. For which I felt thankful. As it enabled me to dedicate myself to God without any reserve.

I have now given a short sketch of my life, until I was one and thirty years of age. At which time I left the walks of old Adam, and forsook all his flowery paths, to find my relation, to the children of the New Creation. And travel out of my lost, by a life of obedience to God. Could the history of my life, for forty five years, after I left this world; be accurately sketched out, would be far more interesting

than what took place previously. Nevertheless I have written in a consise manner, what I passed through, before I found the gospel. And should any of my children, wonder why they did not possess a fortune by their parents. They can see and understand, from the foregoing pages.

Nevertheless, I believe I have done better, by my children, by bringing them into the gospel; where they can lay up a treasure of eternal riches; than I could have done, had I been able to have given them thousands of the treasures of this world

Part Second

Being a concise Statement of my life, from 1805. until the present time 1830.

The great stir of religion, called the Kentucky revival, commenced in this country, in 1801. and was attended with great power of God. Designed no doubt as a breaker, to go before and prepare the way, for the entrance of the everlasting gospel. This work continued until the year 1805. with various manifestations and operations of outward power, such as the jerks, barks, singing, dancing, shouting, and the like.

Many signs and solemn warnings were given. I will mention one, of which I was an eye witness. It was a shower of blood, that fell in August 1804. This occurred at a place, where two families lived in one door yard by the names of Roby and Simpson. It seemed remarkable

and very strange indeed, that there should be a shower of blood, without any clouds, it being entirely clear all the afternoon. The blood fell in the door yard, on the door checks, on the walls of the houses; and on the under side of benches, chairs and tables. And what was still more remarkable, the blood was found on the walls, where clothing was hanging, and the clothes, not in the least stained by it.

This strange phenomanon, was the cause of much speculation and excitement; and many came to view the wonderful sight; but none could account for it. And therefore, many felt greatly alarmed. For my own part, I considered it the work of some supernatural agency, and was designed to effect some end, the cause of which; was not then known to mortals.

The evidences of the work of God, among those called New lights, were such, that I became convinced, and joined their Church, sometime in the fall of 1804. I

therefore enjoyed many comfortable and refreshing seasons. By this means my soul was prepared to receive the testimony of the everlasting gospel of salvation; which opened in this country in 1805. I heard and believed and set out in it, on the 16th day of May, with a settled and fixed determination, to make a full sacrifice of the world, the flesh and all evil. And live a life of self denial, after the example of our blessed Lord. So on the 25th of March 1806. I pulled up stakes, and moved to what is now called Union Village, and settled on land owned by Believers. I lived in my own family, and managed for myself, until the Spring of 1811. when we broke up our family, and gathered into large families. The small children went into the school order I was once more released from the burden of a family. Made a free soul to serve God with my whole heart. I now felt at liberty, to dedicate myself to God without any reserve,

and given up to do his will, in all things. To be led and governed by his annointed, or the visible order. Which it was my faith to obey in all things. That every talent and facultty of my soul and body I determined should be devoted, to the service of my heavenly Father. I stood ready to meet any and every call, where it was felt I could be most useful.

Accordingly, in the spring of 1812. I was called to South Union in Kentucky, to assist that body of people some. I was there about six months, and then returned to Union Village. Early in the year of 1813. I was called to fill a lot in the Deaconship in the Church at Union Village. I, which place I remained for 23 years When by becoming somewhat infirm by reason of age, I was released. Since that time, my employment has been in part, tending the grist and saw mills, together with other things. Of late, I have worked mostly in the

shop, engaged in sizing broom corn &c.

I shall now draw my narative to a close. How well I have performed my part, in all the different tots I have been called to fill, and how much joy and comfort, or tribulation and anguish of soul, I have had to pass through, I shall leave to be adjusted by the records of heaven, in the day of final settlement.

But this much I can say, that I am thankful that I ever heard the way of God. Yea I, am thankful to all the heavenly hosts; for that strength and protection, that has enabled me to keep within the fold to the present day. And my desire and prayer is at this time, to be one of Mothers little simple children; and be able to do her will in all things — Amen.

Now what more shall I say, Or whither shall I turn
I know this is Gods holy way, I feel the fire burn
It is a purifying fire, Consuming all the dross
The living soul to God aspire, While travelling from their toss

O Mother I am thankful, I, in thankful I was called
To travel in the gospel. When I was young and strong
I will be true and faithful, And by my works I prove
That the gospel is my choice, And the way of God I love

Light on our Destiny.

I am greatly interested in an article over the signature of A. J. C. in August number of the Magnifesto, (1892.)

One of the queries therein is as follows: "Blest as we are